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These Senators Are Demanding That ICE Release The Details On The Death Of A Transgender Detainee

"ICE's failure to release this report diminishes the systemic, traumatic, and in this case fatal, violence that transgender individuals experience daily."

By [Adolfo Flores](#) and [Hamed Aleaziz](#)

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[Adolfo Flores](#)

BuzzFeed News Reporter

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Luc Forsyth

Roxsana Hernández, 33, died in ICE custody after arriving in the US with a migrant caravan.

A group of Democratic senators, including Kamala Harris of California, on Wednesday demanded that immigration authorities release documents on the case of Roxsana Hernández Rodríguez, a 33-year-old transgender woman who died in custody earlier this year.

In a [letter](#) obtained by BuzzFeed News, the senators argue that the officials had violated congressional reporting requirements by not making the documents public.

Congress requires Immigration and Customs Enforcement to publish an initial report, for public release, on each in-custody death within 30 days of the death and similarly make public a final report within 60 days, wrote the senators, which included Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich, both of New Mexico. The letter was sent to ICE and US Customs and Border Protection officials.

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“It has been over 180 days since Ms. Hernández was pronounced dead and no such report has been publicly released. ICE’s failure to release this report diminishes the systemic, traumatic, and in this case fatal, violence that transgender individuals experience daily as a result of their gender identity.”

The senators also requested documentation related to the training materials surrounding care of transgender individuals in custody.

“We request that ICE immediately release a full and complete death review and supporting documentation on Roxsana Hernández to the public. We also request that ICE and CBP each provide us with complete accounting and documentation of the specific training that their officers, agents, and contractors receive related to the processing, medical evaluation and care, and safety of transgender individuals in custody,”

the senators wrote.

The Honduran native turned herself into immigration authorities and requested asylum on May. She was in ICE custody when [she died](#) on May 25.

Hernández had traveled with the spring caravan from the Guatemala–Mexico border to Tijuana.

She died at a hospital in Albuquerque after being held at the Cibola County Correctional Center, a federal prison facility in Milan, New Mexico, that CoreCivic, one of the largest private prison companies in the US, operates under contracts with ICE.

Hernández had been taken to another hospital in New Mexico more than a week earlier with symptoms of pneumonia, dehydration, and complications associated with HIV. In a statement, ICE said the preliminary cause of death was cardiac arrest.

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But an independent autopsy report released last week disputes ICE's determination and said the cause of death was most likely severe complications of dehydration combined with complications from HIV. The report noted that according to other detainees, Hernández had severe diarrhea and vomiting, but received no medical treatment for days.

The independent autopsy also found that Hernández appeared to have been physically abused before she died.

The autopsy, reviewed by BuzzFeed News, found that Hernández sustained injuries indicative of blows, kicks, and possible strikes with a blunt object. The report also found that she had deep bruising on her left and right wrists from handcuff injuries.

Danielle Bennett, a spokesperson for ICE, said the agency couldn't speak to the validity of the private autopsy, but called the allegations that Hernández was abused in the agency's custody false.

"At no time did the medical personnel treating Ms. Hernandez at Cibola General Hospital or Lovelace Medical Center raise any issues of suspected physical abuse," Bennett said in a statement.

In an interview with BuzzFeed News weeks before she arrived at the US border, Hernández said she left her home because gangs had continued to threaten her and told her she had to leave the area where she lived in Honduras. Four months before joining the caravan, Hernández said she had been raped by four MS-13 gang members.

"I didn't want to come to Mexico — I wanted to stay in Honduras but I couldn't," Hernández said outside the doors of a church in Puebla, Mexico. "They kill trans people in Honduras. I'm scared of that."

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